



Karl Friday

Loving War Speaker Series

Thomas Kuehne
Clark University



"Male Bonding and Shame Culture: Hitler's Soldiers"

Wednesday, April 20, 2005
12:00 p.m.

Mershon Center for International Security Studies
1501 Neil Avenue
Room 120



The soldiers of the Wehrmacht were involved in the worst crimes in the history of humanity, yet they carried on Total War for almost six years. Admittedly, they did so for the most part under catastrophic living conditions, struggling merely to survive; but we look in vain for any sign that collective protest or collective rejection of the war was being planned on a broad social basis. The cohesion of the Wehrmacht and its military efficiency remained unbroken until Germany's capitulation. Why? Why did so many get involved - and stay involved?

Dr. Thomas Kuehne is the Strassler Family Professor in the Study of Holocaust History at Clark University. He teaches Modern European and German History. Kuehne's academic and research work is concerned with the relation of war, genocide, and society, with long-term traditions of political culture of Central Europe, above all with the problem of locating the Holocaust and Nazi Germany in the social and cultural history of the 20th century.

Kuehne received his academic degrees in Germany. He earned his Ph.D. from the University of Tuebingen in 1994 and taught at the Universities of Konstanz, Tuebingen and Weingarten thereafter. With the support of a research fellowship of the German Research Community he completed his Habilitation thesis at the University of Bielefeld in 2003. Accepting an invitation from the Institute of Advanced Study in Princeton, New Jersey, Dr. Kuehne came to the United States in 2003. He has been at Clark since September 2004.

Kuehne's initial scholarly work focused on the cultural dimensions of the Prussian three-class electoral law in Wilhelmine Germany. His first book, published in Germany in 1994, explores the "electoral culture" of Germany in the last decades before the First World War. He was awarded the German Parliament's Prize for Scholarship.

Kuehne's recent research revolves around the mythical idea of comradeship and the impact of that notion on the actions and experiences of German WWII soldiers. As his forthcoming book argues, comradeship served as the social cement in the German military as well as in the German nation. It held together a variety of practices and emotions as diverse as aggression and altruism. Comradeship combined male bonding through criminal means with in-group "humanity," and it was the model of a shame culture, deeply anchored in German 20th century society.

Kuehne is especially interested in synthesizing new approaches to the history of mass violence. He has organized numerous conferences and edited several essay collections to advance relevant scholarly discussions on cultural, gender, military, and political history, and he is engaged in establishing and improving the institutional and moral frameworks of these fields.

Kuehne's books include *Dreiklassenwahlrecht und Wahlkultur in Preußen 1867-1914. Landtagswahlen zwischen korporativer Tradition und politischem Massenmarkt* (1994), *Handbuch der Wahlen zum Preußischen Abgeordnetenhaus 1867-1918*,

Wahlergebnisse, Wahlbündnisse und Wahlkandidaten (1994) as well as the edited or co-edited volumes *Männergeschichte - Geschlechtergeschichte, Männlichkeit im Wandel der Moderne* (1996, Japanese and Korean versions 1997 and 2001), *Was ist Militärgeschichte?* (2000), *Von der Kriegskultur zur Friedenskultur? Zum Mentalitätswandel in Deutschland seit 1945* (2000), *Raum und Geschichte. Regionale Traditionen und föderative Ordnungen von der Frühen Neuzeit bis zur Gegenwart* (2001), and *Massenhaftes Töten. Kriege und Genozide im 20. Jahrhundert* (2004).

This talk is part of a quarter-long series arranged by Geoffrey Parker around the theme of *"Loving War," and is offered as a graduate seminar (HST 767). The syllabus, including each speaker's recommended readings, is available [here](#).*

About the Series:

Many cultures today and in the past see war as good and so build up cadres of killers that threaten the security and stability of their neighbors. This asymmetry raises many issues:

- How are such cadres of killers found and trained; what motivates them; to what extent do they draw on tradition and to what extent do they forge their own? That is: do they kill because that is what their culture expects or because it works?
- Do cultures that embrace war as good have any distinctive characteristics?
- To what extent is a warrior culture natural or universal? To what extent do individual societies promote, shape, control and suppress the instinct to "love war"?
- What connects and what divides the warrior's understanding of fighting as a heroic individual pursuit and the state's conception of war as protective public policy?
- Do all societies understand, observe and enforce that distinction? If not, is the distinction a hallmark of "civilization" or "modernity"?
- What happens when this distinction is not honored?
- Above all, do the killers "just do it" or do they actually enjoy killing

Upcoming Events :

April 6, 2005: [Nicola DiCosmo](#)
 April 13, 2005: [Karl Friday](#)
 April 20, 2005: Thomas Kuehne
 April 27, 2005: [Robert H. Pape](#)
 May 4: [Eliot Cohen](#)
 May 11: [Peter A. Fritzsche](#)
 May 18, 2005: [Barry Strauss](#)
 May 25, 2005: [N.A.M. Rodger](#)